Fig. 1. Plan of Lower Post, showing Indian Reserves.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1942-1945) 1949 HD12 Nahane HD12

762 Suicide. All evidence agrees that completed suicide is very rare in Kaska society. On the other hand, observation and communications agree that attempted suicide by men is of frequent occurrence and very likely to appear during intoxication. There is a general pattern for such attempted self-destruction. In the two cases of the sort observed during field work, the weapon selected was a rifle. As he brandishes the weapon, the would be suicide announces his intention in an emotional outburst. This becomes the signal for interference to block the deed. One or more men leap forward to wrest the gun from the intended suicide's possession and toss it out of sight. The would be victim is now usually emotionally overwhelmed by his behavior. This pattern is illustrated by Louis Man's behavior during intoxication.* Several times during the afternoon Louis had manifested aggression toward himself, crying: "I don't care if I'm killed. I don't care my life." After several hours of such emotional outbursts interspersed with quarreling and aggression toward his companions, he seized his large caliber rifle and threatened to kill himself. Old Man threw himself on the gun and as the two men grappled for the weapon, Louis succeeded in firing one wild shot. John Keen and the ethnographer ran to the camp and together wrestled the gun from the drunken man. John fired the shells in the chamber and Old Man wound the gun half-way down the outbreak. No punishment or other discrimination is reserved for attempted suicides. The individual is comforted and in the future, while intoxicated, he is watched lest he repeat the attempt.

[642]

763 Dying. The recognized signs of death are scarcely noticeable breathing, a grasping for breath, and a faltering weak pulse rate. When these actions cease completely and the movement of the heart can no longer be felt, the individual is considered dead. As soon as signs of impending death are noticed, it is customary to summon relatives and friends, who may attempt any medication or treatment which suggests itself to retain life. Attention is also focused on the expiring person's last words, which are apt to be remembered for some time. When death is believed to have taken place, one of the relatives feels the person's pulse or heart. If these are silent, the news is circulated to other members of the household or community. The nearest kin of the deceased retire from any but the most essential activities and begin to weep. Friends of the mourners will try to comfort them and bring them out of the depression. "When people feel bad," Old Man said, "we try to make heart strong." Mourning for death always appears genuine and painful, but when observed did not manifest itself in uncontrollable emotional outbursts.

764 Immediately after the fact of death has been established, two female or distant relatives, who are of the same sex as the deceased (and who may belong to the same moiety), wash the corpse with warm water from head to foot. The body is invested in clothing as new and as attractive as possible and is finally wrapped in a length of cotton cloth or other material four or five yards long. Among Lower Post this is apt to be a cotton print material originally purchased for making dresses. The cloth is laid out on the ground and the body placed lengthwise upon it, face up, the legs stretched absolutely straight, the arms folded across the abdomen. Excess yardage is allowed to extend beyond the head. The edges of the material are brought over the body, pulled tight and pinned with safety pins. The cotton

* For a description and analysis of Edward Peter's suicide attempt see Honigmann and Honigmann, Drinking in an Indian-White Community (mscl), 1949-1950.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

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package at the head is then folded across the face. The shrouded body is laid on a blanket, a towel sometimes being used as a head rest. All the belongings of the deceased are removed from the death house to await distribution or destruction. When Old Lady Martha died at Old Man's place, her knees were found to be almost irremediably flexed from the fact that she had spent so many years kneeling and sitting on the ground at her work. After the body was shrouded, a packsack filled with clothing was placed across her knees in order to level them. When questioned as to why flexed knees were undesirable, Old Man explained they would require the construction of a larger coffin.

After the body has been washed and dressed it is left in the house or tent where death took place until the completion of the coffin. Some people may, in winter, keep a small fire burning near the body and also maintain a vigil candle. In general, however, the death place is avoided as much as possible and children are not permitted to play nearby.

Burial as soon after death as possible in the ideal and construction of a coffin is begun almost immediately. Several reasons are given for the desire to inter the deceased so quickly. In the first place, the removal of the spectacle of death relieves the bereavement of close kin. The evidence of death is also a reminder to others of their past losses and hence is depressing. Finally, the intense mourning of close kin, which is apt to be relieved by the final disposition of the corpse, is also depressing to neighbors. During the period that the deceased remains in the tent or cabin, the other occupants of the dwelling live with friends or erect a new residence.

Any other disposition of the corpse than burial in the ground is distasteful. A body should also be interred in a "nice place." "If they throw in the water," Edward Cross said, "No good. People can't go see graveyard."

The construction of the coffin is generally undertaken by a man who is recognized as being skilled in the task. He is assisted in the whipsawing and planing of the lumber, although in Lower Post roadside lumber is purchased. Before whipsawing begins, the measurement of the corpse is taken with a piece of string and considerable care is taken not to cut more boards than are required. If extra lumber remains after the completion of the coffin, somebody else in camp will die. The lumber is trimmed to make the foot portion of the coffin several inches narrower than the head (Plate 12, c). The scene of the construction of the "box," as the coffin is referred to, is not revealed. When the coffin and its cover are completed, their exterior surfaces are covered with a layer of any available material. This is tacked on the four exterior sides of the box, overlapping into the interior and along the bottom; it is also used to cover the exterior of the cover. When the draping of the coffin was observed in connection with Martha's burial, Frederic Donnelly helped her husband cut the material for his grandmother's coffin while the two sons and his brother-in-law tacked the goods in place (Plate 12, d). The finished coffin is transported to the place where the body is waiting. After the body has been placed in the box and the lid hammered into place, the coffin is transported to the burial ground. A small burial area is generally located close to each winter settlement, the few graves being marked by simple crosses on which individuals' names are sometimes crudely pencilled. Sometimes a fence is constructed around the graves, "So dogs don't come around" (Plate 12, e). Two large graveyards are located in Lower Post. These are maintained in an extremely poor condition, being thickly overgrown with aspen,

[804]

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

764 willow, and weeds. Crosses mark most of these graves and there are also a few wire fences.
[351] One grave house may also be seen; apparently it covers a Tahltan burial.

The following record of Lady Mettin's funeral was made at Old Man's place, November 18, 1945.

[793] A sleigh was used to transport the completed coffin to the death camp, Raymond Donnelly setting himself between the shaft bars to pull the vehicle. When he arrived at the tent frame where the body was waiting, Harry Long assisted the youth in carrying the box through the narrow entrance, which Mrs. Man later used away in order to facilitate the coffin's removal. Harry and Raymond placed the body in the box as Mrs. Man, Lady Sam, and Prudence Donnelly watched from the entrance. At this point it was discovered that the sides of the coffin were too low, so that the head of the deceased protruded. Hans was called and dispatched to the carpentering place for additional short pieces of lumber, which could be inserted as wedges to support the lid above the projecting head. Hans found some lumber which Old Man had hewed for skin stretchers and these were used to fit the width of the coffin and increase the height of the back end of the box. The sides thus left open were covered with the draping that had previously been allowed to overlap the underwaffice of the cover.

The coffin was carried out of the tent by Harry and Raymond and placed on a sleigh. Paulette leaded the box to the vehicle, while Raymond began to hitch up five dogs. The men and boys retained the usual emotional imperturbability during this work, but Prudence and her sisters, Anna and Louise, chatted unconcernedly and even laughed at the ethnographer's photographic activities. Meanwhile Harry and Hans had gone into the latter's tent to drink tea and warm up (the temperature was more than twenty degrees below zero, Fahrenheit). When they were through they secured a pick, mattock, and shovel and returned to the carpentering place to prepare a cross out of a red spruce sapling about two inches in diameter. Raymond meanwhile started the sleigh toward the graveyard, riding on the back part of the way. Behind followed a straggling procession including Old Man, his wife, Lady Sam accompanied by Louisa Man, and the ethnographer. When the going became steep and the weight too heavy for the dogs, Raymond suggested that the mourners proceed. He and Louisa, with the ethnographer's assistance, then aided the animals up the steep incline to the burial hill (Plate 12, A). Meanwhile Harry and Hans caught up with the funeral procession and quickly went ahead to prepare the grave.

Early in the morning a large fire had been built on the graveyard in order to thaw the ground for digging. The burned wood was now raked away and the men took turns digging through the still frozen earth with pick and mattock. Raymond, Old Man, and the ethnographer assisted in shoveling the dirt out of the hole. A stick was used to obtain the dimensions of the coffin and to guide the progress of the gravedigging. The work went slowly. In the lower portion of the ground the soil was not yet frozen, and here somewhat faster digging was possible. Nevertheless, darkness overtook the workers before the hole could be excavated to a depth of between four and five feet. Meanwhile the women stood on green brush around a fire which Louisa had kindled thirty feet behind the grave. The evening was intensely cold and overcast, the gathering darkness rapidly obscuring the attractive view which the ridge afforded of the snowcovered Simpson Mountains to the northeast and the Cassiar range to the west.

Two poles, about two inches in diameter, were laid at the upper and lower ends of the burial pit and two similarly placed poles spanned the top of the shaft. The coffin was carried to the grave and rested on the latter poles. The women now moved close to the grave. A quarter inch rope was twice passed under the coffin. With this rope one man lifted the upper end of the

1: Honigmann K-8 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Hahana ND12

low, while two men supported the lower portion. The top poles were pulled low. The man at the upper end of the pit ordered the lower end to be lowered as far as possible whereupon he let his rope and drop into the grave, the length and width of which barely accommodated the coffin. The rope was then pulled up. Old Mike, remaining one minute, bent down and tossed a handful of earth on top of the coffin. Mrs. Mike and Lady Sam followed suit, but without removing their mittens. Harry and Hero then began to shovel dirt into the grave and the other people started returning to the settlement. During the digging of the grave only Lady Sam was tense and sober. The other people, including the working men, chatted of many things without any show of emotion. 764

Mourning by closely related kin may continue for several months, morning being a time when a woman will feel particularly sad and apt to cry. In time the intensity of mourning wears off. It is, however, often prolonged when women are interviewed, weeping or even sobbing for long deceased children being a characteristic feature of women's drinking. 765

Sometime after the interment of the deceased, the clothing worn by the individual at the time of death is burned. Any other possessions, such as packsacks and blankets, which are worn out or old and not desired by relatives as memories, are also destroyed. Other possessions, like guns, kits, axes, and snowshoes are distributed to relatives and friends. Good quality blankets and snowshoes, after being kept out of use for a time, are thoroughly washed with soap and water and stored for future use by members of the deceased person's family. Certain decorative possessions, such as fancy moccasins or an ornamented dog harness, are kept as memories by a surviving parent, a spouse, or child. A woman may also keep her dead mother's sewing tools. Old Mike reported that he could never leave his present house for if he started to "move around" he would lose clothing and other objects that had been associated with his dead son and to which he wanted to hold on. He still used his deceased daughter's silver plated cup, referring to it as "the ghost cup." The dwelling in which the person died remains unoccupied for a week or two and is then smudged. Sometimes a tent frame or tent is permanently abandoned following death. 768

Following the death of a husband or wife, young children may be raised by the surviving spouse or given in adoption. A man will generally entrust the care of his children to his mother-in-law. When Mary Wiley's husband died in the spring of 1941, the latter's brother, Edward Cross, took the widow to his trap line. Old Mike explained that Edward did not want his sister-in-law to "run around" too soon after her husband's death. It is felt that a widow should wait at least a year before making new attachments. Following the death of her husband, a woman retains his name until she remarries.

As participants of the Roman Catholic Church, most of the Kaska have been taught to pray for the dead. Such prayers, however, are rarely said outside of church services. Following the burial of the body, there is little tendency to revisit the graveyard. In the fall of 1945, River Joe asked his son-in-law, Louis Moses, to construct a fence around the plot where Joe's wife and Louis' baby were buried. Following the completion of the fence, he placed a purchased gravestone over his wife's grave. A few days before this occasion Joe accompanied his son-in-law to Old Kaska's place, where the rest of the Upper Liard Indians were temporarily staying, and invited them to share a brew. There would be a "little party," he explained, to celebrate the erection of the stone and the completion of the graveyard fence. A 765 [797] [798] 764 [801]

two people beyond the extreme cases to go the two sides. Ideally, about two years after a person's death, a memorial potlatch should be celebrated by the members of the society to which the deceased belonged. The deceased is commemorated for about two generations.

CONCLUSIONS

In this section we propose to evaluate the manner in which the Kaska secure their goal of interpersonal adjustment. In contrast to the technical culture, where the effectiveness of behavior was judged on the maintenance of life and human efficiency in the physical environment, a sharply defined comparable measure for the social culture is not easy to formulate. Tentatively it may be suggested that the adjustive behaviors of any society can be evaluated on their operation in imposing adequate control on the expression of interpersonal hostility (defensive), keeping to a minimum mentally confusing attitudes and behaviors (dissonance),* and securing sufficient needs to keep the members of the group together and avoided (mobility). It also seems impossible to consider adjustment without some reference to the goals of adaptation, whose achievement is influenced by various aspects of the social culture.

Before going on to examine how well the Kaska manage to meet these minimum standards of adjustment, we will briefly review the over-all quality of Kaska social structure and interpersonal relationships. Kaska social culture may be understood even if it is realized that the Indians conceive of interpersonal adjustment communally, that is, as lying in the avoidance of as many overtly and close human relationships as possible. Somewhat paradoxically (at least from a western point of view), it may be said that the Kaska pursue interpersonal adjustment in terms of interpersonal avoidance or, at least, restraint. In social life this was to correlated with an absence of rigid social organization and of devices for securing such group cheerfulness, cooperation, and unity. The pattern as reflected in the kinship system which, as was pointed out, is not important in regulating interpersonal behavior far beyond the nuclear family. Beyond the household, interpersonal relations tend to occur between individuals rather than between relatives whose statuses and roles are symbolically sharply defined. Such a kinship structure is consistent with a society in which the frequency of social interaction is low for the greater part of the year. If, however, unrelated persons do enter close association with age, kinship terms are usually quickly applied in order that, one relative, age may more accurately anticipate the results of his behavior on another as well as the nature of the behavior to which he will in turn be subject. The social structure of Kaska life is further revealed in the relative unimportance of the society and in also connected by the nature of the marriage contract, which primarily involves only two, or at the most three, people. Since marriage is not important for joining family groups, we find no tendency to elaborate the event; in fact, no crises points in the life cycle are communally elaborated. One of the functions of communal elaboration would seem to be the subordination of the individual's role in an event to the social group whose symbolically expressed recognition is regarded as essential. In Kaska society little note is taken of transitions made along the life gradient. Finally we may consider the demonstration of tension by the absence of

* Sanders has stressed continuity between points of the life cycle but we are now extending such continuity to other aspects of social life. See Sanders, Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning (1948).

A

B

C

D

[END PLATE 12]

out of the house and remained after the women had [illegible]
returned. Otherwise the people would have had [illegible].

[illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible].

When a person died the death was an [illegible]
announced to the people, who assembled and immediately
commenced to sing a death chant. Only middle-aged and
old people joined in the singing of death chants. If
young people sang, they were apt to die early in life.
The song was sung in presence of the corpse and the
lament was addressed to the song. It is said that
sometimes when it seemed sure the person was dying the
people assembled beforehand and sang the chant at the
death bed. The chief and possibly the only object in
singing the death chant was to assist the soul of the
dead person to find the trail to the spirits land, and
therefore some thought the singing of the chant at the
time of the death rather than afterwards, gave him all
the more chance of easily finding the trail. It is said
the beginning of the trail is obscure or hard to find
and dead people are liable to have trouble in finding
it and sometimes go on the wrong trail or get lost. It
seems the change from the state of life to that of death
is considered to be sudden and extreme and the soul
(especially that of an elderly person) on its being part-
ed from the body is more or less in a state of shock or
partly stupified and therefore needs people's assistance.

[illegible] People always enabled the souls of their friends to go to the spirits land; by always directing them in that direction there was such idea of their going as they wished.

The singers circled the ground with short sticks as they sang and move very slowly forward. The words given to me of the old Deerchante (probably the oldest and collected by me are as follows:

"You are the same as a piece of a mountain, you are a piece broken off the mountain, pieces break off naturally and will continue to break off until there are no more and all is flat. This mountain thou art a piece of it, thou art the same as a piece broken off. Pieces will break off until all is flat. But you will stand well *hiiseda*. (The soul or soul is here addressed by the name of his clan or phratry) We are going to sing for you and we will make it well for you. Now thou stand good, *hiiseda*, thou art in a good position. I'm going to make a song for thee, I will sing good for thee."

Then the singers lifted their sticks and

pushed them out or pointed them to the West, at the same time singing "Tsee'e. This way is the trail. This way it goes. Don't miss it. The trail goes right to the west where the sun gets up". It is claimed there are four death chants in use. Two of these are said to be very old and the other two not quite so old.

It may be noted that although the Tahltan claim this song to have originated in the Tahltan country and the air to be purely Tahltan, still they say the words of the song are generally in the Tlingit language; sometimes however Tahltan words with the same meaning are used.

The corpse was laid out and wrapped in a skin blanket which was tied in place with ropes encircling the body. Some of the things belonging to the deceased which were to be burned with him were placed near the body.

The corpse was kept in the house for one or two days or occasionally longer. It was taken outside when the pyre was ready and soon afterwards burned. When the body was to be removed, the pole or poles (one or two) used for carrying were passed through the ropes binding the corpse. They were considerably longer than the latter, extending beyond the feet and head. Men held the ends of the pole in front and others the end at the back. A hole was made in the side of the lodge

764 and the corpse was passed to other men outside. This was so the ghost could not find the way into the house again. Those who had carried the corpse to the hole did not follow it outside but after passing it out turned back and went out the door. It seems this was for fear the souls of the mortuary might be going along with the deceased. When the corpse was about to be borne out, all the young children in the house were covered up so they could not see the corpse being removed. When the latter was out of sight in some cases, and not until burned in other cases, the children were uncovered.

764 763 There was no custom of passing children over fire or making them jump over fire at the death of a parent, but it was customary to make children jump at their deceased parent's feet. This was done shortly before the corpse was carried out. One after another the young children jumped across the portion of the skin blanket extending beyond the deceased parent's feet. Any who were too young to jump were passed over it by their guardian (viz., the relative who now was to look after them and rear them /who/ walked with him, (or her) directly towards sunrise or the Day Dawn. After walking some distance, their guardian passed his hands over each one of them in turn and then, holding up his hands together level with his face, palms up, he blew

strongly along them as if blowing something away. At the same time to prayed, "May these children be healthy and strong. May they never be sick". It is said this ceremony was for the purpose of removing (gathering together and then blowing away) all evil from the children.

A peculiar custom in vogue was as follows: If the deceased was a child and the mother wished to have it return to herself, she had a string tied around her waist, the other end of which was attached to the hand or foot or sometimes other part of the corpse. Brush (willow twigs or any kind of brush) was spread to the hole in the lodge (through which the body was removed) and the string from the corpse passed along the brush. A number of pointers, consisting of short sticks were erected along this path with their ends leaning in the direction of where the mother was. These were to help the soul or ghost to follow in the desired direction. Corpses were generally burned in the day time. Part of the string would burn up during the night or early morning. The woman's husband now cut the string close to his wife. The long part of the string was burned and the short part was allowed to remain attached to the woman for four days. It was then removed and burned. If the mother did not desire to have the child come back in herself, she might select a married daughter

[illegible] for the purpose and, if she consented, the offering was made to her. These ceremonies included such which relatives who died should be return by them. That a married woman or widow relative would hasten to have a brother or a sister return by them. Offerings were made to them in the same way.

When a person was buried there were always some goods buried with him. If a man, he had some clothes, necessities, bottles, weapons and food buried with him. It is believed that all these things were required by a man to use when travelling on the trail to the spirit land.

If the deceased was a wealthy man and possessed slaves one or more slaves were killed at his death. Their bodies were not buried but thrown away some distance or more often thrown in the river or in water. If the deceased had been a kind man and fond of his slaves he told the people before his death "Do not kill any of my slaves", and none were killed. They became the slaves of his heir.

If the man had been fond of his slaves and he thought they would not be treated very well by his heir, he requested that they should be liberated at his death, which was done.

No dogs were killed when their masters died, and there was no custom of relatives of a deceased

[illegible] 780
82

[illegible] 34
133

[illegible]

764

[illegible] 764
783

[illegible]

764

on the top of a post erected for the purpose, either a small house or kind of box built on the ground or built some little height above the ground. In later days small trunks were secured from the Whites and used instead of boxes and grave-houses of their own manufacture. Sometimes, at least in later days, the bones were put in a box, and a house erected over all. Sometimes they were placed in a kind of house or vault built on the ground in the shape of a house roof or a T tent or occasionally the roof was of this shape and the sides were of short light logs laid closely together as in a log cabin. It seems once they were deposited in the grave-house or vault or in boxes or trunks they were seldom troubled with further and the structures were allowed to fall into decay and gradually get scattered or disappear.

However, long ago, when no wooden coverings were used and it was noticed the skin wrapping had become rotten and the bones showing, one of the opposite phratry was engaged to re-wrap the bones in new skin. The person who did this work was paid by the heir or relations of the deceased.

Cemeteries or graveyards were generally situated on prominent points and edges of terraces near the main camps or villages. A number of old grave-yards may be seen in the Tahltan country. Some

of them overlook lakes, streams and villages. But all are in prominent or high places; some are to be met with on low or flat land, especially near trails. Many of the modern graves since burial came into vogue are surrounded by fences. A very few graves have short mortuary columns with or without carved totemic figures. These have probably been adopted from the Coast. Small dolls are to be seen in some grave-houses; some of these appear to have been bought from Whites. They may have been dolls of children buried there. 764

It was expected that on the third day (or about three days) after the burying of the corpse, numerous ghosts would come around to get the spirit of the deceased or to search for it. Therefore at this time a single eagle feather was hung at the top of each house door or doorway to keep them out. These feathers were kept hanging for two or three days. No rattles or strings of hoops were used to keep away ghosts. No juniper or other strong smelling plants or evergreens were burned or used in other ways to keep ghosts away. Places where corpses have lain or graves or depositaries of the dead were not swept with branches of the rose or other trees. 764 775

All close relatives of a deceased person cut their hair shortly after the death of the relative. From the time of the relative's death until the hair 765

Indians who dressed several neither of these aforementioned but turned into fish.* People who committed suicide also ended up in a distinctive realm but no informant could describe this beyond the fact that it was "a black place" and no shade of the "dead." Suicide, usually by hanging, might follow a period of extreme anger or a bitter quarrel.

The wind enjoyed only a single reincarnation. Informants did not agree as to whether the souls of the good or evil returned to life. One man said that by means of reincarnation the wind of a wicked person received "another chance."* Following suicide, death became final so that the man who did evil during his second life not only went to the devil but remained there for eternity. Testimony of reincarnation came through a child saying, "I know this country. I been here before." According to one man, "My boy lapsed and says this. 'Time time I'm dead. Now I'm born again. I come back this country. I say again!'" (R).*

As already brought out, the shadow remained, for a time at least, around the death camp or the body's burial place. In superstition the ghost's color seemed black. Apparently a ghost largely devoured itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased cruelly during life. Sometimes ghosts sought "persons," particularly girls. They called prospective victims by name and to hear one's name called in ghostly fashion portended death. The younger siblings of a deceased child exhibited particular vulnerability to such solicitations. Sometimes ghosts threw stones, trying to hit a living person. When they succeeded the victim would die. Although reputed to an cause of impending death, it is not clear whether ghosts spoke through the cracking fire.*

All the "relatives" (i.e., members of the same society) in the vicinity visited the bedside of a dying man, wept with him, and shook his hand. They felt that in all likelihood they would never see him again. The company remained assembled until death occurred. Without receiving any change of mission the body was then wrapped in a robe with the hands always open. For the farm to be checked prominent death to the east of his. However, the eyes were closed; "otherwise he looks to see if another relative

* It is believed that the spirit of the deceased is caught by the lamentors and dragged into his hole, and there it is turned into . . . the native hobgoblin, or ghost of the woods. On account of this superstition, drowning is considered the worst calamity that can befall man, especially if the body is not recovered." Jones, *Study of the Tlingits of Alaska* (1916), 102.

* That the evil dead should be reborn seems reasonable and has been reported for the Kwakiutl. Ogburn, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kwakiutl* (1930), 140.

* Kwakiutl children gave similar testimony. (Ogburn, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kwakiutl* (1930), 140.) The Tlingit "believe that the soul transmigrates from relative to relative, but not from man to animals. For instance, if a nephew dies who has borne some peculiar mark (perhaps a birthmark) on his person and no sooner should afterwards give birth to a son who was similarly marked, it would be fully believed that the newly born was none other than the departed nephew and his name would be given to the child." Jones, *Study of the Tlingits of Alaska* (1916), 324; see also Swanton, *Social Conditions, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 465, Drucker, *Cultural Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1943), 158.

* The Tlingit believed that spirits of the deceased communicated with the living through cracking in the fire Swanton, *Social Conditions, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 461.

764 to following him.[illegible] People denied fear of a corpse, the informants having heard of such an attitude around Fort Simpson, where only old people could be persuaded to prepare a body for burial because the young men fled over the bank. The dead body was usually removed from the dwelling through the entry. Sometimes the corpse would be carried through the rear wall in order to conceal it from children. People thought that for a child to look at a dead body permitted the ghost to see and perhaps take a fancy to the youngster.* It would seem that ghost fear rather than fear of the corpse characterized the people of the Coast.

The dead were disposed of in four ways, through cremation, interment, abandonment, and exposure in a tree. In "really cold" weather the corpse was burned. Members of the moiety opposite to that of the deceased built a coffin of baked poles corresponding to the size of the body. Dry wood was included in the box along with the corpse. Then the workers cremated a fire and disposed. Nobody witnessed the actual cremation, as people disliked the odor of burning human flesh. When the blaze died down the men returned to see that the fire had been fully consumed. This organ always burned slowly and had to be discovered as the "relatives" would become angry. Following complete destruction the skull and bones were mixed together and deposited in a small hole dug on the site of the fire.* People placed a stick over the place of interment.*

[116]

In summer a pit three feet deep was dug with sharp poles to accommodate a corpse. Sometimes interment also occurred in winter when a fire had to be built to thaw the ground. The grave, usually located on a ridge, was lined with poles and a layer of spruce boughs.* Grave workers took care not to bring extra poles to the site lest another per-

[117]

* Preparation of the corpse became somewhat elaborate after contact, when the deceased was dressed in new clothes and his face covered with a handkerchief. For two or three days the body might be displayed to visitors who lifted the cloth for a last view.

* Though bodies were never removed through the door but through an aperture in the rear or side of the house. The custom emphatically prevented the spirit from finding its way back to the death place. Jenness, *Study of the Tlingit of Alaska* (1994), 155.

* The only other evidence of secondary disposal is mentioned in an anecdote about one man, the Chief, who in 1889 exhumed his wife's body at Lower Post. She was a Bear Lake (Sekani) Indian and her sorrow disliked the fact that the last have turned to a Kaska graveyard. After took the corpse to McDame Creek, where the people became alarmed at his act and felt that many of them would die because a corpse had been brought from so great a distance. "This is true," the informant assured us. "Many people have died there since then" (8). According to Jenness, the Tlingit "will even exhume bodies and bones and bury them in some other spot in order to keep sorcerers for . . . hunting." Jenness, *Study of the Tlingit of Alaska* (1994), 156.

[117]

* Jenness affirms that the Kaska had adopted cremation from the Tahltan and Tlingit but later supplanted this form of disposal with ground burial. A Dease River informant said exactly this about his own people, as will be reported below. (Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* [1932, 300.] Jenness reports that among the Tlingit "at one time cremation was the universal way of disposing of the dead, except of the bodies of slaves, which were unburied and deposited in dead houses." The ashes collected after burning a corpse were placed in a box which was stored in a death house with clothing, food, and blankets. Disposal of the corpse was in the hands of another "totemic group" who were paid according to the rank of the deceased. Jenness, *Study of the Tlingit of Alaska* (1994), 136-137. See also Swanton, *Social Conditions, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 458, who says that shamans' bodies were abandoned along the shore.

* McLean reports the Mackenzie River Athapaskans around 1864 were accustomed to "dispose of

[illegible] the same means they burned fragments of wood consisting from the one direction of the burial rocks. Preparations for burnings varied with ethnic objectives of the deceased who, of course, belonged to the opposite moiety. They also carried the body from the dwelling to the place of burnings. The only grave goods were the clothes and ornaments worn at the time of death. A painted stick thrust into the ground at the head of the grave served to remind survivors of its location. The Cocha did not practice blood burial. Various patterns of idiosyncratic behavior such as a hollow-log coffin and the whole practice of burying the deceased within the dwelling. The family thereupon moved camp without demolishing the former residence.

After handling a corpse men participated in rituals to ward off the malevolent influences associated with death. Upon returning from the grave, instead of directly entering camp they first circled (danced around) the dwellings. Meanwhile those people who had not gone to attend the burial had prepared sticks within which they used to strike the grave workers as the latter made their circuit. "We kill game," the people cried, whereupon the dancers fell to the ground. They rose immediately and entered the house, where each washed his hands and on some occasions that had been cooked by the opposite moiety. The meal constituted a "small" burial feast. During the serving the hosts kept talking in loud voices saying, "You got some bear, you kill it too long ago." Reference was being made to the corpse that had just been disposed of. The grave workers then thanked their hosts. If the workers belonged to the Cow moiety their gratitude was expressed in a circumlocution like, "You got wing and fly around and get game. We got no wing." Such an indirect expression of thanks appears to have been common in many social situations.*

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their dead by placing them in rocky nooks of wood, and sufficiently strong to resist the attacks of wild beasts. The body is laid in the nook or hollow tree, without any particular direction being observed as to the head or feet. Neither they, nor any other Indians I am acquainted with, place their dead in a sitting posture." It is difficult to determine from the text whether niches or subsurface "nooks" are indicated. Mickum, Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory (1861, 34).

* Among the pre-contact Poly River people a gun and blanket were tied to the grave with the corpse. "The men were supposed to follow him to the grave. On the way their chief or head man was supposed to walk ahead and call their God that one of his children was coming to him, ceremonially firing the gun belonging to the dead man. When they arrived at the grave and had lowered the body into it, they fired two more shots, then loaded the gun again and left it on full cock and placed it on top of the coffin pointing west. Then the head man spoke to the dead person, calling him by name two or three times, then telling him, 'You are leaving us now to go to our great Father according to the life you have led here before whether good or bad in the reception he will give you. You are the trail ahead of you leading from here to his camp in the west that we on earth are not permitted to see, you must follow this trail, neither turning to the right or to the left on small hunting trails, but keep to the well beaten one. We will put food in the fire every time we cook for you to eat on the way. . . .' They then fill in the grave and return to camp where the relatives make a feast for the opposite moiety from the deceased, whether Wolf or Raven in honor of the dead, and there food into the fire for him to eat.

"When the dead person arrives at the west, if he is a good Indian he is met by God, who gives him a hearty welcome and leads him to where the other Indians are engaging that have died before him, who also give him a hearty welcome and make a big feast for him. When they are through eating they dance and sing and gamble and have a general good time. If the Indian dead should not have been a good Indian on earth, the God is liable to turn him into a bear or a moose or any kind of animal and

4: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1949)1954 MD12 Nahane MD12
Dease River
Tsetsaut
Frances Lake

764 765 768 Everyone in camp assembled when death seemed inevitable. Long ago bodies were disposed of by cremation and the Tahltans continued the custom a long time after the Dease River people began to inter their dead in the ground. Coffins as well as any form of tree burial were denied. Members of the opposite moiety handled the corpse. Mourning rites included hair cutting but not mutilation. The dwelling in which death had taken place as well as most of the possessions left by the deceased came to an end by destruction, a practice designed to avoid illness.

761 764 765 768 *Tsetsaut.* Death followed when the wind deserted the body and journeyed to an afterworld about which the informant knew little. The corpse was cremated and the bones interred in a small pit about one foot deep. Anyone who had handled the corpse avoided food and drink for two days but no particular relatives were charged with this responsibility. Elevated cache and canoe burials could not be recalled. In mourning a widow cut short her hair, fasted for several days, and wore ragged clothing. At night she slept little, deliberately keeping herself awake by means of sharp sticks placed under her head. Her plans for remarriage demanded the approval of her brother-in-law [316] or he might wed her himself. Scarification, face blackening, and hair singeing were denied. A widower observed food and drink taboos but did not cut his hair.

Property destruction following death was denied.

774 761 775 *Frances Lake Kaska.* A person's wind or soul, located in the stomach, resembled the breath or the air that one inhaled. Just as breathing sustained life the loss of the wind (breath) produced death. The informant denied that there could be a temporary alienation of body and wind. The soul continued to survive after quitting the body and if it had belonged to a good man became reincarnated. Following death the ghost (tsuna), which was always dangerous, remained in the neighborhood for a period ranging from ten days to a year. During this time it hunted, copulated with women, visited its birthplace, and completed any tasks that the deceased throughout his life had left uncompleted. In appearance the ghost resembled a living Indian but could only be seen and not sensed tactually. Ghosts also avenged themselves for injuries that had been sustained in life. To announce themselves they sometimes whistled. Knocking did not constitute a ghostly signature.

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rather cool, dingy place underground to the west; a light agreeable place on the same level as the earth to the east; and a place above in the sky. Only people killed in battle go to the last. Sometimes they come out, and dance as the sunrays. When the latter consist of red clouds, people say there is a war somewhere. When the streamers of the sunrays descend, forming a kind of chute, it is said that the spirits are receiving a brave warrior whose soul ascends through this chute, and is borne away as the streamers ascend. The sky heaven is said to be the best abode. That to the east is somewhat like this earth, but better in so far as food is always abundant. Most people go to it. They have to descend a slippery hill, and cross a river. Some are afraid, and turn back to be reborn again, or wander about until they reach the place of shades in the west where conditions are not as good as in the other places, and food is often scarce. Teit, *On Tahltan (Athabaskan) Work* (1912), 486. Cf. Speck, *Naskapi* (1935), 51, who also speaks of the dead appearing in the northern lights.